

Stuhlmuller Vineyard

Leo Hansen *Winemaker*



Born and raised in Denmark, Leo Hansen has been passionate about food and wine all his life. The son of a chef and hotelier, Leo grew up in the service industry, helping in his father's kitchen from the age of 12. In 1992, after completing a degree in business sales and marketing at Denmark's Grenna College, Leo began studying at the Kolding Hotel and Restaurant School. During a rigorous four-year apprenticeship, Leo worked with Orla Farmann, renowned European sommelier and national champion for the Danish Sommelier World Cup Team. Under the tutelage of Farmann, Leo's palate and love of wine developed, and he began studying wine in earnest.

In 1997, after extensive study and travels throughout the great winegrowing regions of Europe, including Loire, Alsace, Champagne, Burgundy, Spain and Italy, Leo received his certification as a European sommelier. That year, he became wine director at the famed Kong Hans restaurant, Copenhagen's first one star Michelin guide restaurant. After a trip to California to scout out new selections for Kong Hans's 400-wine list, Leo was inspired to take the next step in his wine education.

Impressed by the freedom and quality of California's vibrant wine scene, Leo moved to Sonoma County and took an apprenticeship at Clos du Bois to study winemaking firsthand. There, he worked in the vineyards and the cellar before being moved to the laboratory to begin doing enology. In 2000, Leo accepted a position at Chateau Soverain, and also began taking courses in chemistry, viticulture and winemaking at Santa Rosa Junior College. After a three-month stint in 2001 working for Bowen Estate winery in Coonawarra, Australia, Leo returned to Chateau Soverain where he continued refining his scientific skills in the lab.

Having worked with Stuhlmuller's excellent single vineyard fruit at both Clos du Bois and Chateau Soverain, Leo was thrilled when offered the position of cellar master at Stuhlmuller Vineyards in 2002. Showing an aptitude in all areas of viticulture and winemaking, Leo quickly made himself indispensable working alongside winemaker Kerry Damskey. In January of 2003, Leo was officially made assistant winemaker and began overseeing day-to-day operations. Thriving in the hands-on environment of a family-run winery, Leo showed a gift for blending his classically trained European palate, with his understanding of the depth and character of Stuhlmuller's vineyard-focused wines.

In 2004, Leo was appointed winemaker for Stuhlmuller Vineyards. Taught to appreciate the relationship between wine, food and people, Leo works to craft authentic and engaging wines. "I love the intimacy of working in a small winery," says Leo. "You get to discover the charm and subtleties of each vineyard block. This is an amazing vineyard. As a winemaker, I try to show it respect with a gentle approach that focuses more on natural yeasts and less on oak. The goal isn't to speak for the vineyard, it's to let the vineyard speak for itself."